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CONTENTS

The Provision of Material for the Historian—Books 57
Registration Rules 63
Organization of the Book Trade—II. 68
Standing Executive Committee 75
News and Notes 77
Fiction List 79

THE PROVISION OF MATERIAL FOR THE HISTORIAN—BOOKS

H. G. MILLER

I HAVE been asked to speak about the providing of books for the historical student; and I don't think I can do this better than by simply describing a few of the generally helpful books. I shall say nothing, save incidentally, about parliamentary and other official publications, and nothing about local history.

1. For bibliographies and general reference works, it must suffice to refer you to the list in John Harris's *Guide to New Zealand Reference Material.* In Hocken's *Bibliography of New Zealand Literature,* Scholefield's *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* and the *New Zealand Official Year Book* and the rest of them, we are well provided

Mr. Miller gave this paper at the Wanganui Conference.

with the preliminary aids to research; and I suppose our most serious lack is now a good historical atlas.

II. Of general histories we have in Rusden what is really a gigantic tract on race-relations that isn't half as interesting as the report (a substantial volume) of the libel case to which it led. But it provides a useful warning to the student about the nature of evidence; for it shows that a statement may be vouched for by the Governor of a colony, who has heard it from the Bishop of the diocese, who has heard it from the Superintendent of the province and still be hard to prove in a court of law. As a failure to realize this cost Rusden £5,000, it is a lesson that is worth learning.

A book of greater value is Saunders' big two-volume History, which is old-fashioned and opinionated but lively and the work of an eye-witness of much that he describes. It deserves to be supplemented by his posthumous book, *Tales of a Pioneer*, where you may read how the author landed at Nelson in 1842 and built himself a house and started a flour-mill, how he went off to Adelaide to find a wife and drove her in a four-wheeler from Adelaide to Sydney over a country without roads, how he spent three months in a Nelson gaol for criticizing a judge, how he changed the course of the Ashburton River and how for many years he laid about him in the good old uninhibited style of the English 'radical' and fought a long battle for education and temperance and individual enterprise and free speech and phrenology, and how he knew a bad man when he saw one. There are few books where so much may be learned that is important about the first 50 years of settlement.

Of the shorter books Pember Reeves' *Long White Cloud* is still very much worth reading. For the rest, you can hardly walk down a corridor at Victoria College without bumping into the author of an Outline of New Zealand History, and none of them is entirely without merit.

I would like to say at this point how much I have enjoyed Mr. Randall Burdon's volumes of *New Zealand Notables*, notable for their fresh and vigorous and fairminded treatment of a very mixed lot of people.

Maori and Missionary

III. I want to say a word now about books dealing with special periods. First, the period of missions and European settlement and race-conflict, ending about 1870.

When we are reading about the Maoris of the first half of the 19th Century, it is always wise to stress the fact that the repulsive picture of Maori life, painted by writers such as Maning, does not give a fair account of normal Maori life in pre-European times. What Maning describes is a people whose way of life has been upset by a generation of tribal wars of quite a new kind, produced by European weapons and European ideas of domination. For normal Maori life

it is better to go to the accounts of Nicholas, Cruise and Yate, and to later books such as Best's *Maori as He Was;* and to the pictures of Angas's *New Zealanders Illustrated.*

On the other hand, when we are reading about the missionaries, it is Maning's account that we need to keep before us; for it was with a people who had been uprooted by tribal wars that the missionaries had to deal. Men like Hongi and Heke and Kawiti and Rauparaha and Waharoa were men who were trying to walk straight on land that wouldn't lie still. The course of the tribal wars is described very fully in Percy Smith's two volumes; and the results may be seen in Maning and in the ghastly glimpses provided in the letters of missionaries, printed in the *Missionary Register* and elsewhere.

To get an idea of the problems of the missionaries I should recommend Carleton's *Life of Henry Williams* and Coleman's *Memoirs of the Rev. Richard Davis* and William White's *Christianity Among the New Zealanders,* and perhaps I may mention a pamphlet of my own, entitled *Maori and Missionary.* (These are only about Anglican missions, but they are the most important.) The great thing to get hold of here is that the sociological task of the missionary was to prepare a people whose institutions and ideas had been undermined by tribal wars for life in the new social order that the European settlers were preparing to establish.

The First Settlers

When we come to the settlers themselves, it is very important to get some idea of what they were like; and of course, the best way to do that is to study the country from which they came. Books such as the first volume of Halévy's great *History of the English People* and G. M. Young's *Early Victorian England,* and Cobbett's *Rural Rides* and Bamford's *Life of a Radical,* and the biographies and novels of the period supply what is needed and a picture like Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England* is more revealing than many books.

Of European social life in the new land, we have some very good accounts in books like E. J. Wakefield's *Adventure in New Zealand from 1839 to 1844,* and Pratt's *Colonial Experiences,* Saunders' *Tales of a Pioneer.* Charlotte Godley's *Letters from Early New Zealand,* and the colonial newspapers. The chief impressions that one gains from studying them are: first how *young* they all were and second how *unfitted* they nearly all were for the job to which they had set their hands. Of the first 10,000 settlers, 4,000 were under 14 and not one in ten knew anything about farming. They were nearly all 'very British'; and the social distinction between 'cabin' and 'steerage' was as final as a law of nature. Only half of the people could read and write, life was hard and tastes were simple and amusements were few and unrefined. 'Harmonic evenings' at the local pub, gigantic Temperance Tea-meetings, barn-dances and horticultural shows and horse-

races and public executions were among the principal forms of amusement. And for some time in 1840 Wellington at least had a theatre. And what a Theatre! Here are some of the plays: The Idiot Witness or a Tale of Blood, Red Ranold the Rover or the Rose of Ettrick Tale, The Tiger of the Seas or the Dumb Sailor Boy, Raymond and Agnes or the Bleeding Nun, The Tempter or the Old Mill of S. Denis, Jonathan Bradford or the Murder at the Wayside Inn. There is matter here, I suppose, to interest our present-day censors of public morals but certainly the plays were popular and hundreds were turned away.

The taste for violence was not exhausted by melodrama and medical science and public executions and an occasional duel: it found expression in political controversies which were indeed a kind of duel where adjectives served in place of bullets. I wish I had time to give you a sample.

Maori and Settler

It was in those days that the colony got a constitution and its 6,000 voters found themselves required to man a General Assembly and six Provincial Governments, each of which had a sort of Governor called a Superintendent and a Speaker and a Cabinet and its own statutes and a code of procedure modelled on that of the House of Commons. If you want to read about these matters there are Hight and Bamford's *Constitutional History and Law of New Zealand*, and Morrell's *Provincial System in New Zealand* to help you along. A very urgent need is for a good constitutional history to take the place of Hight and Bamford and everybody who has studied our history must have felt the need of a careful study of the Treaty of Waitangi and its interpretation by the courts.

As you will all know the Maoris were in one way or another prevented from taking any part in the new self-governing system and at the same time European numbers increased, and increasing pressure was put on the tribes to part with their lands. As they were increasingly unwilling to do this, friction grew and war ensued, which lasted for a good many years and ended by destroying the work of the missionaries and taking the heart out of the leading chiefs.

To understand all this one must read Sir John Gorst's *Maori King* and Sir William Martin's great pamphlet on *The Taranaki Question*, together with Fenton's reports on Waikato and the report of the Waikato Committee and Archdeacon Hadfield's pamphlets on Waitara. It is one of the events of our history that we can hardly look back on without shame. (It is perhaps worth warning you that the English Parliamentary papers include much that did not appear in New Zealand.)

IV. About the period beginning in 1870, I can be brief, because it is better known. The chief interest here is the evolution of 'the Welfare State.'

When Wool Was King

In the 30 years that follow the Maori wars the discovery of gold brought new settlers, the great sheep runs of the South Island were established, the demoralized chiefs of the North Island were induced to sell most of their lands, and land everywhere accumulated in a very few hands. Wool was king.

There is no satisfactory book on this period as a whole. Condliffe's *New Zealand in the Making* is the best available and much may be learned from Lipson's *Politics of Equality* and from the biographies of the leading men. A book of great interest and importance is Larkworthy's *Ninety-one Years*, which gives an astonishing account of the foundation of some of our great financial corporations from the inside; and an idea of what was happening with regard to Maori lands may be got from the report of the Royal Commission on the Heretaunga Purchase.

Like all human affairs the record of these years is a mixture of the squalid and the noble; and the nobility lies in the plain story of the labours and trials of the people who broke in the land. For this you must go to books like Lady Barker's *Station Life in New Zealand*, Butler's *A First Year in the Canterbury Settlement*, Kennaway's *Crusts*, Firth's *Nation Making*, and Guthrie Smith's *Tutira*, and to the numerous local histories. The general development of farming has been described in a very interesting book by Mr. Alley and Mr. Hall.

Since 1890 we have seen two great social changes: First the invention of refrigeration and the breaking up of the large estates brought into existence an army of industrious dairy farmers, and then the growth of cities created the army of wage-earners that we know so well; and these two sets of people in turn discovered how to get control of governments. It has all ended in a paradise of the average man: a country where the resources of the whole land are marshalled to minister to the convenience and comfort and enlightenment of a sheltered little community whose motto is no longer Onward! but She'll do!

The best books on all this are, I think, Siegfried's *Democracy in New Zealand* and the chapters on New Zealand in Lord Bryce's *Modern Democracies* and Dr. Hare's report on *Industrial Relations in New Zealand;* and, for a connected account of economic and political affairs there is no substitute for the quarterly summaries in the Round Table, which make a brave attempt at objectivity. For social life, Oliver Duff's *New Zealand Now*, Helen Simpson's *Women of New Zealand* and Mr. Somerset's *Littledene* are all very rewarding.

Other Source Material

I want to wind up with a reference to a type of source-material that is often overlooked and is, in fact, particularly valuable. I mean

descriptions of New Zealand and New Zealanders in books that are not mainly about New Zealand. The descriptions and comments of Colonel Mundy and Sir John Fortescue and Falconer Larkworthy and Count von Hübner and Lord Bryce and the Marquis of Salisbury and Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Philip Gibbs and Father Martindale, to say nothing of Colonel Peniakov are of great interest and should not be overlooked by those who wish to interpret and criticize our way of life and to measure our leaders by the standards of other lands. I will venture to say that we can learn more about ourselves by reading Popski's *Private Army* than by reading all the New Zealand novels that have ever been written; but in all these writers something may be learned. Especially they help us to become a little more detached from homegrown prejudices and preconceptions.

Sir John Fortescue, who lived in Wellington for four years, says of one of our great men that nobody who had ever looked at his face could believe in his honesty; Mr. Larkworthy says (and he had quite exceptionally good opportunities of finding out) that in the eighties the name of New Zealand stank in the great financial centres of the world; Mrs. Sidney Webb wrote in her diary of the 'abominable vulgarity' of the parliamentary debates of the nineties; Lord Bryce has some sobering remarks about the decay of public life in New Zealand in the early 20th Century that we should all do well to ponder; and the historian of the American Navy in the Great War has a withering reference to 'New Zealand labour' as 'lazy, expensive and inefficient.' Such things are worth notice.

On the other hand we should not disregard the praise. Father Martindale, like Lord Bryce a great traveller, has some very pleasant things to say of the manners of ordinary New Zealanders and Philip Gibbs compares the New Zealand soldiers in France in 1917 to the Anglo-Norman knights and squires who followed the Black Prince into France in the Middle Ages. He was impressed by 'their clean-cut hatchet faces, sunbaked, tanned by rain and wind, their simple-blue-grey eyes, the fine strong grace of their bodies,' very much as Anna Comnena was impressed in the 13th Century by the Norman knights who wandered around Constantinople on their way to the Crusades.

All this, I suggest, is a kind of material that may be lying around on the shelves of dozens of libraries but yet, because it is not in the New Zealand section, may be overlooked.

We librarians have a duty in such matters. Some of you may know the sad story of Luther's lost *Commentary on S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, which, while the scholars of Germany were ransacking heaven and earth for more light on the Reformation, was all the time lying in a show-case in the Berlin Museum!

I have put together these notes in the hope that we may be able to avoid such scandals in connection with the study of the history of New Zealand.